

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: November 2, 2021
Time: 5:30pm
Place: Via Zoom Meeting
Egremont

The meeting was audio and video recorded.

Present at the meeting in person were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie.

Others present via zoom:

Eileen Vining: Bylaw Review Committee
Tom Reynolds: Buildings & Grounds Superintendent
Sue Funk: Collector/Treasurer
Ned Baldwin: Building Inspector
Emily Eyre: Green Committee
Keila Sheldon: Library Trustee
Dave Campbell: Cemetery Commission
David Seligman: Conservation Commission
Francine Groener: Library Trustee and Assessor
Jason LaForest: Police Chief
Juliette Haas: Board of Health and Town Clerk
Pamela Knowles: Council on Aging
Jim Noe: Road Superintendent
Fred Gordon: Housing Committee
Marj Wexler: Associate Planning Board member
Richard Slutsky: Bylaw Review Committee
Rebecca Turner: Historical Commission
Peg McDonough: American Rescic Plan Act (ARPA) Administrator
Cara Becker: Personnel Director
Bruce Bernstein: Council on Aging
Steve
Mary McGurn: Bylaw Review Committee
Jared Kelly: Planning Board
Danile Jordan-Kelly: School Committee
Chuck Ogden: Board of Health
Poly Lanoue: Water Department
Will Brinker: Water Clerk

Assessors: Francine Groener

Announced the recent appointment of Alice Tortoriello to the Board to fill the vacancy left by Robin Goldberg's retirement. Cyclical revals are ongoing, a full reval is about to be

completed, the new assessment program Tyler is being utilized. The FY 23 budget will include increases connected to the assessing contract with Regional Resource Group, mailings and training.

Buildings & Grounds: Tom Reynolds

Last year at French Park the horse ring footing was replaced, help was given at the Pollinator gardens, the rest room roof was replaced, the basketball courts were resurfaced and trees removed to open up the area, and the sand at the Volley Ball courts was replaced. At Town Hall an upstairs room formerly used by the Police Department was refurbished for the Personnel Director's office, a temporary enclosure was built at the entry for COVID safety, shields were installed in offices also for COVID safety, trees were removed behind Town Hall, carpet was put on the floor in the Conservation Commission, and the electrical upgrade was started.

This year the electrical upgrade at Town Hall is ongoing as the generator has not been delivered and there are other parts on back order as well. At the park the main driveway entrance repair work will begin soon. Trees were removed around the Library, on the Village Green, and at the maintenance shop. The chips from those tree removals were used at the dog park. The structural repairs and ADA upgrades at the Library are about to begin.

ARPA funds are being planned to make some improvements at French Park with the addition of a new piece of playground equipment, benches along the trails and repair of the bridges on the trails.

The department is waiting on delivery of the new truck that was approved at Annual Town Meeting. Estimated delivery is January/February of 2022. The new tractor/mower arrived and the old one was declared surplus and sold.

Next year the improvements at the park will be completed, and there are no other plans beyond general maintenance. At Town Hall, repairs to the front entry are being planned, as well as an upgrade to the bathrooms on the second floor. There will likely be budget increases as costs of many items, such as gas, have gone up.

Tom was thanked for his great example of Egremont's continuing to give service under challenging conditions, as well as his team doing great work while they were both experienced extended illnesses. Tom responded when asked that his team did not have to fill the water tank at the vegetable gardens due to the excessive rain, they did raise the tank and put it on a more stable foundation. At the Pollinator Garden they helped and will supply chips in the near future. Tom feels the Pollinator Gardens may have become more than they anticipated.

Building Inspector: Ned Baldwin

There has been a lot more building over the last year or so. Paper files in the office need to be digitized. More people are asking to review house plans as they buy homes here and some of the old paper files are hard to find and are deteriorating. Ned thought there might be some grant funds available under cybersecurity for this. Town Hall also has no place to store paper files. It was noted that some support staff may be needed during the digitization process. All files going back a few years are digitized as we are doing permits through an online process. It is hoped that this will not impact the budget. There has been an increase in building permit revenue because of the increase in the number of permits being issued.

Bylaw Review Committee: Mary McGurn

There is no change in the purpose of the Committee because of the increased population. The committee has begun to consider how to present their work to the Community. Is there some way to get a clear picture of the increased population and who constitutes it?

There is no impact from or on the Route 23/41 reconstruction project.

The costs of a re-designed web page being paid from the ARPA funds would be beneficial.

The Committee is conducting a substantive review of the general bylaws. Definitions are being added, consistency in verbiage, reorganization and reformatting are being considered. The Committee will be planning public information sessions.

The Committee has continued to meet since its inception in September of 2020 and will progress through the bylaws not yet reviewed. The Committee feels it will complete its review by the end of the year.

The Committee does not have a budget and will not be requesting a budget.

It was noted that the Committee is dealing with what touches peoples lives on a daily basis.

Cemetery Commission: Dave Campbell

The Commission meets the first Friday of each month at 8:30am. The Commission maintains the three town cemeteries; Hillside, Riverside and Town House Hill. The Commission does not maintain the private Mt Everett Cemetery next to the Library. The Commission is grateful for Will Brinker's help. In the coming year, more work will be done on monument/grave stone repair at the Riverside Cemetery.

Collector/Treasurer: Sue Funk

Sue expressed concern over the Tax Classification being planned for November 23 as that is late and could result in a delay in tax bills being printed. She does not want to send a third quarter preliminary bill.

Completed Streets Committee: Mary Brazie

Mary reported that Jared Kelly has stepped down as the Chair. The Committee has not met since the pandemic began. There is new complete streets funding coming available in January so the Committee will be asked to meet soon.

Compactor Operations: James Noe

Jim reported that in FY 2023 the trash compactor will need to be replaced. The last estimate received was \$30,000. Mary reported that funds have been being set aside for this replacement for several years and there is about \$14,000 available. At the same time, the attendants hut will need to be replaced, likely with a prefab. Is it possible that any of this expense could come from ARPA as there has been an increase in usage?

Conservation Commission: David Seligman

There has been an increased demand for the services that is certainly a COVID factor. Former part-time residents are spending more time and thus spending money on their properties. Members are attending training sessions. The Commission is seeking more associated members as there is no limit on how many the commission can have, but the commissions actual

membership is limited. The Commission has been, and will continue, to be directly involved in the Route 23/41 reconstruction project and have been working closely with MassDOT. The Commission sees no need to use ARPA funds, but is working on the Forest Management Plan and the Open Space & Recreation Plan update that are both funded through grants. The assistance of the new part-time clerk, Shannon Poulin, in working through the back log and digitizing files has been invaluable.

The Commission is discussing proposing wetlands related bylaws and is working on an effective electronic means to conduct hearings in the future. The Commission will be asking for additional funding for its part-time clerk and for continued training. As well the Commission will ask to continue the budget for outside consulting.

Council on Aging: Bruce Bernstein

It was a challenging year for the seniors, who are the most vulnerable population for COVID. The council helped to keep them safe and connected. Bruce noted the passing of Egremont Village Inn owner Sara Keene and commented on the great relationship the Inn has with the Council. Luncheons will continue as grab and go. Meetings have been taking place outside during warm weather with celebrations and other events taking place at French Park. The Council lost two members of the last year, Helen Krancer and Eve Goldberg, and gained two members, Linda Warner and Pamela Knowles. The Council is hoping to attract younger seniors.

There is no public transportation in Egremont through Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, and in the midst of the pandemic Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation closed. The Town obtained a grant to pay for Taxi services and a grant to purchase a transportation van.

The Council could not do what it does without Administrative Assistant Peg Muskrat. She schedules the taxi rides, and coordinated the free meal delivery during the pandemic. Three Egremonters, Georgette Kinney, Ginger Alexander, and Caroline Palmucci, are Ombudsmen who work in the local nursing homes.

The council was thanked for its ability to maintain a sense of connectivity thru out the pandemic.

Cultural Council:

Mary Brazie reported that with the resignation of three members of the Council, the council has been left in flux. Other members have been left with no guidance or knowledge of how to move forward. The remaining members, three from Egremont and two from Alford, are not willing to take a leading role. New membership is needed. This is a very important time of year as applications for funding are being filed.

Emergency Management: Ed McCormick written report read by Mary Brazie

The EGREMONT Emergency Management Team was busy during the past year with Covid related matters. Although the Team could not meet for its usual monthly meetings it was able to communicate via telephone conference when necessary. Our main function was to coordinate information from Federal and State officials and various health agencies and to then disseminate the information to our residents. We were very successful in doing this as EGREMONT experienced very few Covid incidents.

I would like to thank Massachusetts Emergency Agency for their diligence in their daily checks with us and providing EGREMONT with protective supplies to reduce the Covid risks.

In addition I would like to thank the Select Board, local and state Health Departments, Fairview Hospital, Southern Berkshire Planning Committee, EGREMONT Fire, police and highway Departments for all your help in coordinating our efforts to keep EGREMONT healthy and safe.

Green Committee: Emily Eyre

There has been an increasing demand for service as the population grows. The Committee will continue to encourage residents to recycle, share, upcycle and reduce consumption. The Committee encourages the use of ARPA funds to mitigate the impact of climate change. New projects were used pill bottle collections: 2000 bottles have been collected. Apparel collection is now taking place at the Transfer Station with the inclusion of two collection bins. The anti-idle bylaw is being enforced. The Committee will continue its exchange of ideas, writing articles for the Berkshire Edge, and posting eco-tips in the town newsletter. Though the E-Recycles event has not taken place due to the pandemic, 42 miles of road were cleaned up by volunteers. The rain barrel sale was very successful with 80 barrels being sold to Egremont residents. New member Sharon Waskow and Emily have initiated an effort to encourage local food establishments to reduce plastic use. The volunteer help of guest Bonnie Greenwood has been greatly appreciated.

Board of Health: Charles Ogden

Due to the increased population and demand for services, the Board received more hours for its Director last year. The Public Health Alliance continued to serve the Town doing inspections and COVID related work. ARPA funds are being used to hire additional nursing staff for the Alliance. Municipal Vulnerability Program work is ongoing. The Board addressed all the challenges presented by COVID and appreciates the cooperation received. No vaccine or mask mandates were put in place. The Board sees no need for a budget increase. When asked about the Public Health Alliance being paid for inspections while the Board of Health Director was doing inspections, Chairman McGurn said that discussion would take place at a future meeting.

Highway Department: James Noe

The increase in population has resulted in high traffic volumes at all times on all roads. The Department is going to have to consider police details or a dedicated flagger while doing road work for the safety of its employees. The reconstruction of Route 23/41 will have minimal impact on the Town department. ARPA & infrastructure funds could be helpful with road construction costs increasing. Currently a culvert is being replaced with funding through a Housatonic Valley Association program. The Department is currently preparing for winter. Paving was done on several town roads, as well as repainting of lines. Catch basin cleaning was recently completed due to the heavy rain volumes. The road repair prioritization list will be updated for next year. Some planned resurfacing projects were not completed this fall because of the weather. Supply costs are increasing which likely will result in a budget increase. The Department is not seeking any large capital items, though will need a new plow that costs about \$9,000 and a new boom for the mower which costs about \$20,000. Vice-Chairman Vermeulen asked about supply chain issues for winter sand and salt. There is no indication at this time those items will be delayed. Orders have already been placed.

Historical Commission: Rebecca Turner

The Commission was busy during 2021 reviewing the Route 23/41 reconstructions plans, reorganizing the Archives room, celebrating the town's birthday, preparing a demolition delay bylaw. The commission feels with the influx of new owners and huge swings in real estate sales that a demolition delay is important to protect historic structures. The Commission will continue reorganizing

the archives and updating MACRS. New initiatives will include reaching out to other town Commissions, holding coffee/tea hours, presentations in the archives, and an annual newsletter. The Commission does not foresee any spending changes.

Housing Committee: Fred Gordon

The Committee has doubled in size recently with the addition of Bruce Kaufenbaum, Judith Goodman, Doug Mishkin and Liz Keen. This is seemingly a dream team of Committee members as many have vast knowledge of different aspect of housing and housing needs. S&K Design has completed its feasibility study of the town's 6.1 acre lot. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is conducting a housing needs study. Several non-profit organizations have been asked to comment on the feasibility study. The Committee will be seeking input from the Planning Board on how best to move forward within the confines of zoning. ARPA funds could possibly cover the cost of the feasibility study, though those funds were raised at last years town meeting.

Human Resources: Cara Becker

HR has no budget. Work is progressing on updating personnel policies and procedures. Over the past year Cara successfully got to know the town's employees. She said this town is lucky to have the employees that it has and congratulated everyone on a good job.

Library: Francine Groener

In 2021 the vital services of the Library continued with a 40% increase in circulation over 2019. Browsing in the Library was suspended during the height of the pandemic with pre-orders and curbside pickup being implemented. 25 new patrons joined the Library over the last year. The Library saw an increase in academic book request for remote learning. The passes to local museums and cultural venues were back this summer. In 2022 the Library plans to organize some day trips for patrons. The non-fiction book club has 18 members. The wi-fi at the Library is now lightening speed and being utilized by many. CWMARS is invaluable to the Library. During the upcoming renovations to the building, Library services will operate out of Town Hall as the Library will have to be closed.

Municipal Vulnerability Plan(MVP): Juliette Haas

MVP is moving according to the time line established. A survey has been sent out to residents. Publicity will begin soon. Stakeholders meetings will be held in December. Community outreach meetings will take place in the spring. The goal is to create an integrated climate, hazard mitigation plan.

Planning Board: Jared Kelly

The Board approved numerous Form A divisions of land and Chapter 61 and 61A releases. Work continues on possible bylaw amendments; defining a structure, fences, and junk. The first special permit for an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) was approved. The Boards procedures need to be cleaned up. Future work will include a return to work on possible zoning districts. The Route 23/41 reconstruction project will transform the landscape of main street in the South Village, as has the widespread availability of broadband. Grant funds have been received to update the Master Plan. This will take 12 to 16 months and will help to guide the town's development for the next 20 years.

Police Department: Jason LaForest

Service has been consistent with the growing population. There have been no issues with man power. The Department will oversee the police details for the Route 23/41 reconstruction project. Peg McDonough is working with the Chief to see if a new cruiser can be covered by the ARPA funds. The IMC merge with County Dispatch is complete and was a success. The Chief is looking for grant funds for body cameras, will continue to outfit the department to be independent, such as by purchasing a new Operating Under the Influence machine. A new cruiser will be in the FY 23 budget.

School Committee: Danile Jordan-Kelly

School has returned to full-time in-person after being remote and then part-time in-person during the pandemic. Masks are mandatory while in all district school buildings. The district is preparing quarterly newsletters and reaching out to the Community. During the pandemic the HVAC system at the school was upgraded with COVID funds. The Early Childhood Task Force is seeking community members. The district is supporting career opportunities through internships and mentors, so is looking for community interest. A new math program has been implemented. The district is teaming with Simon's Rock to offer early college programs. The South Egremont school program is full and the teacher is amazing.

Town Clerk: Juliette Haas

The increase in population was felt during last years elections and added time to being in the office. 2020 was contentious election year and there were more voters. The legislature is making permanent changes to mail in and early voting regulations. As things have quieted down, she is catching up on archival work and making sure that the birth, death and marriage records are filed correctly as there have been in increase in requests for them. In FY 22 the budget for elections was lowered as there were less elections and will need to be increased for FY 2023 as there will be 3 elections.

Transportation Department: George McGurn

The Town is waiting on delivery of its transportation van that the Town was awarded a year ago. The Department is ready and there are 3 individuals to drive the van, at least 2 of them are fully trained.

Water Department: Poly Lanoue yielded to Will Brinker

The Department is updating its infrastructure and hoping to get internet service to the plant. Leak detection equipment, back up chlorine pump, and turbidity monitors were purchased. An upgraded security system is being looked at. The water line system as a whole is being looked at for water line replacement. The cost for an engineer to do a long-term capital plan is being investigated. The Department is currently in compliance with all state and federal regulations. The infrastructure is aging. Future needs of the Department are a small truck for the operator, hiring of a part-time stand by operator to be in the plant for safety. Poly Lanoue reported that a rate increase mandated by the Department of Pubic Utilities took effect on November 1. Will Brinker explained that the increase is graduated and encourages conservation. The increase is 3-7% higher then the former rate.

ARPA Administrator: Peg McDonough

Was able to listen to the other town boards give an overview of how they think the ARPA funds can help them.

Adjournment 7:29pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.22/nov2allboards

The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.